

Ticket To Work And Work Incentives Improvement Act Of 1999

The Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act of 1999 was enacted on Dec. 17, 1999. This new law:

- increases beneficiary choice in obtaining rehabilitation and vocational services;
- removes barriers that require people with disabilities to choose between health care coverage and work; and
- assures that more Americans with disabilities have the opportunity to participate in the workforce and lessen their dependence on public benefits.

The provisions of the law become effective at various times, generally beginning one year after enactment. They are described below.

Ticket To Work Program

Most Social Security and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) disability beneficiaries will receive a "ticket" they may use to obtain vocational rehabilitation, employment or other support services from an approved provider of their choice.

The Ticket to Work Program is voluntary. The program will be phased in nationally over a three-year period. During the first phase, in early 2002, SSA will distribute tickets in 13 states: Arizona, Colorado, Delaware, Florida, Illinois, Iowa, Massachusetts, New York, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Carolina, Vermont, and Wisconsin.

During the second phase later in 2002, SSA will distribute tickets in an additional 20 states: Alaska, Arkansas, Connecticut, Georgia, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, North Dakota, South Dakota, Tennessee, Virginia and in the District of Columbia.

The third phase will extend the program to the rest of the states in 2003. These include Alabama, California, Hawaii, Idaho, Maine, Maryland, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Texas, Utah, Washington, West Virginia, Wyoming, American Samoa, Guam, Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands.

For more information on the ticket program, or to find out if the program is in your state, call Maximus, Inc., program manager, at 1-866-968-7842 toll-free (TTY 1-866-833-2967).

Expanded Availability Of Health Care Services

As of Oct. 1, 2000, the law expands Medicaid and Medicare coverage to more people with disabilities who work.

Medicare's Part A premium-free hospital insurance coverage is extended a minimum of 8 1/2 years to most Social Security disability beneficiaries who work.

States may now provide Medicaid coverage to more people who are still working. States also may permit working individuals with income above 250 percent of the federal poverty level to purchase Medicaid coverage. This provision creates an experiment in which medical assistance will be provided to workers with impairments who are not yet too disabled to work. In addition, a Medicaid Infrastructure Grant program is available to support State efforts to increase employment options for people with disabilities. To find out if these provisions are available in your State, call the State Medicaid office in your area or check the State Chart of Work Incentives Activity at www.ssa.gov/work/Beneficiaries/activity.html.

Expedited Benefits

As of Jan. 1, 2001, when a person's Social Security or SSI disability benefits have ended because of earnings from work, he or she would be able to request reinstatement of benefits, including Medicare and Medicaid, without filing a new application.

Beneficiaries must be unable to work because of their medical condition. They must file the request for reinstatement with Social Security within 60 months from the month their benefits are terminated. In addition, they may receive temporary benefits—as well as Medicare or Medicaid—for up to six months while their case is being reviewed. If they are found not disabled, these benefits would not be considered an overpayment.

Deferral of Medical Disability Reviews

As of Jan. 1, 2001, an individual who is “using a ticket” will not be subject to regularly scheduled continuing disability medical reviews. However, benefits can still be terminated if earnings are above the limits. As of Jan. 1, 2002, Social Security disability beneficiaries who have been receiving benefits for at least 24 months will not be medically reviewed solely because of work activity. However, regularly scheduled medical reviews can still be performed and, again, benefits terminated if earnings are too high.

Work Incentives Advisory Panel

The law establishes a Work Incentives Advisory Panel within Social Security, composed of 12 members appointed by the President and Congress. The panel is to advise the Commissioner and report to Congress. At least one-half of the panel members must be individuals with disabilities or their representatives.

Work Incentives Outreach Program

The law directs Social Security to establish a community-based work incentives planning and assistance program to disseminate accurate information about work incentives and to give beneficiaries more choice. Social Security has established a program of cooperative agreements and contracts to provide benefits planning and assistance to all Social Security disability beneficiaries. State Protection and Advocacy systems will provide legal services and advocacy services as needed.

Demonstration Project Planned

Under the law, Social Security will conduct a demonstration project to test reducing Social Security disability insurance benefits by \$1 for each \$2 that a beneficiary earns over a certain amount.

For More Information

For more information on the ticket program and other work incentives, visit our special website at www.ssa.gov/work. Or call our toll-free number, **1-800-772-1213**, (TTY 1-800-325-0778) and ask for the booklet, *Working While Disabled, How We Can Help*.

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